AN

ESSAY

ON THE

ORIGIN

OF THE

ENGLISH STAGE,

PARTICULARLY ON THE

HISTORICAL PLAYS

OF

SHAKSPEARE.

MDCCXCIII.

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AN ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH STAGE*, &c.

IT is well known that dramatic poetry in this and moſt other nations of Europe owes its origin, or at leaſt its revival, to thoſe religious ſhows, which in the dark ages were uſually exhibited on the more ſolemn feſtivals. At thoſe times they were wont to repreſent in the churches the lives and miracles of the ſaints, or ſome of the more important ſtories of ſcripture. And as the moſt myſterious ſubjects were frequently choſen, ſuch as the Incarnation, Paſſion, and Reſurrection of Chriſt, &c. theſe exhibitions acquired the general name of MYSTERIES. At firſt they were probably a kind of dumb ſhews, intermingled, it may be, with a few ſhort ſpeeches; at length they grew into a regular ſeries of connected dialogues, formally divided into acts and ſcenes. Specimens of theſe in their moſt im-

* Extracted from the FIRST VOLUME of RELIQUES OF ANCIENT ENGLISH POETRY, 1767, 3 Vols. 12mo. with few alterations, except in Section IV.

proved ſtate (being at beſt but poor artleſs compoſitions) may be ſeen among Dodſley's OLD PLAYS and in Oſborne's HARLEYAN MISCEL. How they were exhibited in their moſt ſimple form, we may learn from an ancient novel, often quoted by our old dramatic poets, *(a)* intitled .... a merye Jeſt of a man that was called Howleglas *(b)* &c. being a tranſlation from the Dutch language, in which he is named *Ulenſpiegle*. Howleglaſs, whoſe waggiſh tricks are the ſubject of this book, after many adventures comes to live with a prieſt, who makes him his pariſh-clerk. This prieſt is deſcribed as keeping a LEMAN or concubine, who had but one eye, to whom Howleglaſs owed a grudge for revealing his rogueries to his maſter. The ſtory thus proceeds, ... "And than in the meane ſeaſon, "while Howleglas was paryſh clarke, at Eaſter they "ſhould play the Reſurrection of our Lorde: and for "becauſe than the men wer not learned, nor could "not read, the prieſt toke his leman, and put her in "the grave for an Aungell: and this ſeing Howleglas, "toke to hym iij of the ſympleſt perſons that were in "the towne, that played the iij Maries; and the Per"ſon [i. e. Parſon or Rector] played Chriſte, with a "baner in his hand. Than ſaide Howleglas to the "ſymple perſons, Whan the Aungel aſketh you, "whome you ſeke, you may ſaye, The parſons leman "with one iye. Than it fortuned that the tyme was "come that they muſt playe, and the Aungel aſked "them whom they ſought, and than ſayd they, as "Howleglas had ſhewed and lerned them afore, and "than anſwered they, We ſeke the prieſts leman with "one iye. And than the prieſte might heare that he "was mocked. And whan the prieſtes leman herd

(a) See Ben Jonſon's Poetaſter, Act 3, ſc. 4, and his Maſque of the Fortunate Iſles. Whalley's Edit. vol. II, p. 49, vol. VI, p. 290.

(b) Howleglaſs is ſaid in the Preface to have died in M,cccc,l. At the end of the book, in M,ccc,l.

"that,

"that, ſhe aroſe out of the grave, and would have "ſmyten with her fiſt Howleglas upon the cheke, but "ſhe myſſed him and ſmote one of the ſimple perſons "that played one of the three Maries; and he gave "her another; and than toke ſhe him by the heare "[hair]; and that ſeing his wyfe, came running haſ-"tely to ſmite the prieſtes leaman; and than the "prieſt ſeeing this, caſte down hys baner and went to "helpe his woman, ſo that the one gave the other "ſore ſtrokes, and made great noyſe in the churche. "And than Howleglas ſeyng them lyinge together by "the eares in the bodi of the churche, went his way "out of the village, and came no more there (c)."

As the old Myſteries frequently required the repreſentation of ſome allegorical perſonage, ſuch as Death, Sin, Charity, Faith, and the like, by degrees the rude poets of thoſe unlettered ages began to form compleat dramatic pieces conſiſting entirely of ſuch perſonifications. Theſe they intitled MORAL PLAYS, or MORALITIES. The Myſteries were very inartificial, repreſenting the ſcripture ſtories ſimply according to the letter. But the Moralities are not devoid of invention; they exhibit outlines of the dramatic art: they contain ſomething of a fable or plot, and even attempt to delineate characters and manners. I have now before me two that were printed early in the reign of Henry VIII; in which I think one may plainly diſcover the ſeeds of Tragedy and Comedy; for which reaſon I ſhall give a ſhort analyſis of them both.

One of them is intitled [illegible] (d). The ſubject of this piece is the ſummoning of Man out of the world by death; and its moral, that nothing will then avail him but a well-ſpent life and the comforts of religion. This ſubject and moral are opened in a mo-

(c) [illegible] by William Copland: without date, in 4to, bl. let. among Mr. Garrick's Old Plays, K. vol. X.

(d) This Play has been reprinted by Mr. HAWKINS in his 3 vols. of Old Plays, intitled, THE ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA, 12mo. Oxford, 1773. See vol. I. p. 27.

nologue ſpoken by the MESSENGER (for that was the name generally given by our anceſtors to the Prologue on their rude ſtage:) then GOD *(e)* is repreſented; who, after ſome general complaints on the degeneracy of mankind, calls for DETH, and orders him to bring before his tribunal EVERY-MAN, for ſo is called the perſonage who repreſents the Human Race. EVERY-MAN appears, and receives the ſummons with all the marks of confuſion and terror. When Death is withdrawn, Every-man applies for relief in this diſtreſs to FELLOWSHIP, KINDRED, GOODS, or Riches, but they ſucceſſively renounce and forſake him. In this diſconſolate ſtate he betakes himſelf to GOOD-DEDES, who, after upbraiding him with his long neglect of her *(f)*, introduces him to her ſiſter KNOWLEDGE, and ſhe leads him to the "holy man CONFESSION," who appoints him penance: this he inflicts upon himſelf on the ſtage, and then withdraws to receive the ſacraments of the prieſt. On his return he begins to wax faint, and after STRENGTH, BEAUTY, DISCRETION, and FIVE WITS *(g)* have all taken their final leave of him, gradually expires on the ſtage; Good-dedes ſtill accompanying him to the laſt. Then an AUNGELL deſcends to ſing his *Requiem:* and the Epilogue is ſpoken by a perſon, called DOCTOUR, who recapitulates the whole, and delivers the moral:

"℣. This memoriall men may have in mynde,
"Ye herers, take it of worth old and yonge,
"And forſake Pryde, for he diſceyveth you in thende,
"And remembre Beautè, Five Witts, Strength and
"They all at laſt do Every-man forſake; [Diſcretion,
"Save his Good Dedes there dothe he take;

(e) The ſecond perſon of the Trinity ſeems to be meant.
(f) The before-mentioned are male characters.
(g) i. e. The Five Senſes. Theſe are frequently exhibited as five diſtinct perſonages upon the Spaniſh ſtage; (ſee Riccoboni, p. 98.) but our moraliſt has repreſented them all by one character.

"But

"But beware, for and they be ſmall,
"Before God he hath no helpe at all," &c.

From this ſhort analyſis it may be obſerved, that **Every Man** is a grave ſolemn piece, not without ſome rude attempts to excite terror and pity, and therefore may not improperly be referred to the claſs of Tragedy. It is remarkable that in this old ſimple drama the fable is conducted upon the ſtricteſt model of the Greek tragedy. The action is ſimply one, the time of action is that of the performance, the ſcene is never changed, nor the ſtage ever empty. EVERY-MAN, the hero of the piece, after his firſt appearance never withdraws, except when he goes out to receive the ſacraments, which could not well be exhibited in public; and during his abſence KNOWLEDGE deſcants on the excellence and power of the prieſthood, ſomewhat after the manner of the Greek chorus. And indeed, except in the circumſtance of Every-man's expiring on the ſtage, the Sampſon Agoniſtes of Milton is hardly formed on a ſeverer plan *(h)*.

The other play is intitled **Hick Scorner** *(i)*, and bears no diſtant reſemblance to Comedy: its chief aim ſeems to be to exhibit characters and manners, its plot being much leſs regular than the foregoing. The Prologue is ſpoken by PITY repreſented under the character of an aged pilgrim, he is joined by CONTEMPLACYON and PERSEVERANCE, two holy men, who, after lamenting the degeneracy of the age, declare their reſolution of ſtemming the torrent. Pity then is left upon the ſtage, and preſently found by FREWYLL, repreſenting a lewd debauchee, who, with his diſſolute companion IMAGINACION, relate their manner of life, and not without humour deſcribe the ſtews and other

(h) See more of EVERY MAN, in vol. II. Pref. to B. II. Note.
(i) Imprynted by me Wynkyn de Worde, no date; in 4to. bl. Let. This play has alſo been reprinted by Mr. HAWKINS in his "Origin of the Engliſh Drama." Vol. I. p. 69.

places of baſe reſort. They are preſently joined by HICK-SCORNER, who is drawn as a libertine returned from travel, and, agreeably to his name, ſcoffs at religion. Theſe three are deſcribed as extremely vicious, who glory in every act of wickedneſs: at length two of them quarrel, and PITY endeavours to part the fray; on this they fall upon him, put him in the ſtocks, and there leave him. Pity, thus impriſoned, deſcants in a kind of lyric meaſure on the profligacy of the age, and in this ſituation is found by Perſeverance and Contemplacion, who ſet him at liberty, and adviſe him to go in ſearch of the delinquents. As ſoon as he is gone, Frewill appears again; and, after relating in a very comic manner ſome of his rogueries and eſcapes from juſtice, is rebuked by the two holy men, who, after a long altercation, at length convert him and his libertine companion Imaginacioun from their vicious courſe of life; and then the play ends with a few verſes from Perſeverance by way of Epilogue. This and every Morality I have ſeen conclude with a ſolemn prayer. They are all of them in rhyme; in a kind of looſe ſtanza, intermixed with diſtichs.

It would be needleſs to point out the abſurdities in the plan and conduct of the foregoing play: they are evidently great. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that, bating the moral and religious reflection of PITY, &c. the piece is of a comic caſt, and contains a humorous diſplay of ſome of the vices of the age. Indeed the author has generally been ſo little attentive to the allegory, that we need only ſubſtitute other names to his perſonages, and we have real characters and living manners.

We ſee then that the writers of theſe Moralities were upon the very threſhold of real Tragedy and Comedy; and therefore we are not to wonder that Tragedies and Comedies in form ſoon after took place, eſpecially as the revival of learning about this time brought them acquainted with the Roman and Grecian models.

II. AT

II. At what period of time the Moralities had their rise here, it is difficult to discover. But plays of miracles appear to have been exhibited in England soon after the Conquest. Matthew Paris tells us that Geoffrey, afterwards Abbot of St. Albans, a Norman, who had been sent for over by Abbot Richard to take upon him the direction of the school of that monastery, coming too late, went to Dunstable, and taught in the abby there; where he caused to be acted (probably by his scholars) a MIRACLE-PLAY of ST. CATHARINE, composed by himself (a). This was long before the year 1119, and probably within the 11th century. The above play of St. CATHARINE was, for aught that appears, the first spectacle of this sort that was exhibited in these kingdoms: And an eminent French Writer thinks it was even the first attempt towards the revival of Dramatic Entertainments in all Europe; being long before the Representations of MYSTERIES in France; for these did not begin till the year 1398 (b).

But whether they derived their origin from the above exhibition or not, it is certain that Holy Plays, representing the miracles and sufferings of the Saints, were become common in the reign of Henry II. and a lighter sort of Interludes appear not to have been then unknown (c). In the subsequent age of Chaucer, "Plays "of

(a) *Apud Dunestapliam, . . . quendam ludum de sancta Katerina (quem* MIRACULA *vulgariter appellamus) fecit. Ad quæ decoranda, petiit a sacrista sancti Albani, ut sibi Capæ Chorales accommodarentur, et obtinuit. Et fuit ludus ille de sancta Katerina.* Vitæ Abbat. ad fin. Hist. Mat. Paris, fol. 1639, p. 56.—We see here that Plays of Miracles were become common enough in the time of Mat. Paris, who flourished about 1240. But that indeed appears from the more early writings of FITZ-STEPHENS: quoted below.

(b) Vid. Abregé Chron. de l'Hist. de France, par M. Henault à l'ann. 1179.

(c) See Fitz-stephens's description of London, preserved by Stow, (and reprinted with notes, &c. by the Rev. Mr. Pegge, in 1774, 4to.) *Londonia pro spectaculis theatralibus, pro ludis scenicis, ludos habet sanctiores, representationes miraculorum, &c.* He is thought to have written

"of Miracles" in Lent were the common reſort of idle goſſips *(d)*.

They do not appear to have been ſo prevalent on the continent, for the learned hiſtorian of the council of Conſtance *(e)* aſcribes to the Engliſh the introduction of Plays into Germany. He tells us that the Emperor having been abſent from the council for ſome time, was at his return received with great rejoicings, and that the Engliſh fathers in particular did, upon that occaſion, cauſe a ſacred Comedy to be acted before him on Sunday Jan. 31, 1417; the ſubjects of which were: THE NATIVITY OF OUR SAVIOUR; THE ARRIVAL OF THE EASTERN MAGI; and THE MASSACRE BY HEROD. Thence it appears, ſays this writer, that the Germans are obliged to the Engliſh for the invention of this ſort of ſpectacles, unknown to them before that period.

The fondneſs of our anceſtors for dramatic exhibitions of this kind, and ſome curious particulars relating to this ſubject will appear from the HOUSHOLD Book of the fifth Earl of Northumberland, A. D. 1512 *(f)*: whence I ſhall ſelect a few extracts which ſhow, that the exhibiting Scripture Dramas on the great feſtivals entered into the regular eſtabliſhment, and formed

ten in the R. of Hen. II. and to have died in that of Rich. I. It is true at the end of this book we find mentioned *Henricum regem tertium*; but this is doubtleſs Henry the Second's ſon, who was crowned during the life of his father, in 1170, and is generally diſtinguiſhed as *Rex juvenis*, *Rex filius*, and ſometimes they were jointly named *Reges Angliæ*. From a paſſage in his Chap. *De Religiosis*, it ſhould ſeem that the body of St. Thomas Becket was juſt then a new acquiſition to the church of Canterbury.

(d) See Prologue to Wife of Bath's Tale, v. 6137. Tyrwhitt's Ed.

(e) M. L'ENFANT. Vid. Hiſt. du Conc. de Conſtance, Vol. II. p. 440.

(f) "The Regulations and Eſtabliſhments of the Houſhold of "Hen. Alg. Percy, 5th Earl of Northumb. Lond. 1770." 8vo. Whereof a ſmall impreſſion was printed by order of the late Duke and Ducheſs of Northumberland to beſtow in preſents to their friends.—Although begun in 1512, ſome of the Regulations were compoſed ſo late as 1525.

part

part of the domeſtic regulations of our ancient nobility; and, what is more remarkable, that it was as much the buſineſs of the Chaplain in thoſe days to compoſe PLAYS for the family, as it is now for him to make Sermons.

"MY Lordes Chapleyns in Houſehold vj. viz. The "Almonar, and if he be a maker of INTERLUDYS, than "he to have a ſervaunt to the intent for writynge of "the PARTS; and ells to have non. The maiſter of "gramer, &c." Sect. V. p. 44.

"ITEM, my lorde uſith and accuſtomyth to gyf yerely "if is lordſhip kepe a chapell and be at home, them of "his lordſchipes chapell, if they doo play the Play of "the NATIVITE uppon criſtynmes day in the mornnynge "in my lords chapell befor his lordſhip—xxs." Sect. XLIV. p. 343.

"ITEM, ... to them of his lordſhip chappell and "other his lordſhipis ſervaunts that doith play the Play "befor his lordſhip uppon SHROF-TEWSDAY at night "yerely in reward—xs." Ibid. p. 345.

"ITEM, ... to them .... that playth the Play of "RESURRECTION upon eſtur day in the mornnynge in "my lordis 'chapell' befor his lordſhipe—xxs." Ibid.

"ITEM, My lorde uſeth and accuſtomyth yerly to gyf "hym which is ordynede to be the MAISTER OF THE "REVELLS yerly in my lordis hous, in criſtmas for the "overſeyinge and orderinge of his ſordſchips Playes, "Interludes and Dreſinge that is plaid befor his lord-"ſhip in his hous in the xijth dayes of Criſtenmas and "they to have in rewarde for that caus yerly—xxs." Ibid. p. 346.

"ITEM, My lorde uſeth and accuſtomyth to gyf "every of the iiij Parſones that his lordſchip admyted "as his PLAYERS to com to his lordſhip yerly at Cri-"ſtynmes ande at all other ſuch tymes as his lordſhip "ſhall comande them for playing of Playe and Inter-"ludes affor his lordſhip in his lordſhipis hous for every "of their fees for an hole yere" .... Ibid. p. 351.

"ITEM,

"ITEM, to be payd .... for rewards to PLAYERS for "Playes playd in Chriſtynmas by Stranegeres in my "houſe after xxd. (g) every play, by eſtimacion "ſomme—xxxiijs. iiij. (h)." Sect. I. p. 22.

"ITEM, My Lorde uſith, and accuſtometh to gif "yerely when his Lordſhipp is at home, to every erlis "PLAYERS that comes to his Lordſhipe betwixt Criſtyn- "mas ande Candelmas, if he be his ſpecial Lorde & "Frende & Kynſman—xxs." Sect. XLIII. p. 340.

"ITEM, My Lorde uſith and accuſtomyth to gyf "yerely, when his Lordſhip is at home to every Lordis "PLAYERS, that comyth to his Lordſhipe betwixt Cry- "ſtynmas and Candilmas—xs." Ibid.

The Reader will obſerve the great difference in the Rewards here given to ſuch PLAYERS as were Retainers of noble Perſonages, and ſuch as are ſtiled STRANGERS, or, as we may ſuppoſe, only Strolers.

The profeſſion of a Common Player was about this time held by ſome in low eſtimation. In an old ſatire, intitled, **Cock Lorelles Bote** (i) the Author, enumerating the moſt common trades or callings, as "carpenters, coopers, joyners," &c. mentions

"PLAYERS, purſe-cutters, money-batterers,
"Golde-waſhers, tomblers, jogelers,
"Pardoners, &c." Sign. B. vj.

III. It hath been obſerved already, that Plays of Miracles, or MYSTERIES, as they were called, led to the introduction of Moral Plays, or MORALITIES, which prevailed ſo early, and became ſo common, that, towards the latter end of K. Henry VIIth's reign, John Raſtel, brother-in-law to Sir Thomas More, conceived

(g) This was not ſo ſmall a ſum then as it may now appear; for, in another part of this MS. the price ordered to be given for a fat ox is but 13s. 4d. and for a lean one 8s.

(h) At this rate the number of Plays acted muſt have been twenty.

(i) Pr. at the Sun in Fleet-ſtr. by W. de Worde, no date, b. l. 4to.

a deſign

a deſign of making them the vehicle of ſcience and natural philoſophy. With this view he publiſhed "C. A new interlude and a mery of the nature of the iiii elements declarynge many proper poynts of philoſophy naturall, and of dyvers ſtraunge landys, (a) &c. It is obſervable that the poet ſpeaks of the diſcovery of America as then recent;

—— "Within this xx yere
"Weſtwarde be founde new landes
"That we never harde tell of before this," &c.

The Weſt Indies were diſcovered by Columbus in 1492, which fixes the writing of this play to about 1510 (two years before the date of the above Houſhold Book). The play of Dick-Scorner was probably ſomewhat more ancient, as he ſtill more imperfectly alludes to the American diſcoveries, under the name of "the Newe founde Ilonde." [Sign. A. vij.]

It is obſervable that in the older Moralities, as in that laſt mentioned, Every-man, &c. is printed no kind of ſtage direction for the exits and entrances of the perſonages, no diviſion of acts and ſcenes. But in the

(a) Mr. Garrick has an imperfect copy, (Old Plays, i: vol. III.) The Dramatis Perſonæ are, "C. The Meſſenger [or Prologue] "Nature naturate. Humanyte. Studyous Deſire. Senſuall Appe-"tyte. The Taverner: Experyence. Ygnoraunce. (Alſo yf ye "lyſte ye may brynge in a dyſgyſynge.)" Afterwards follows a table of the matters handled in the interludes; among which are, "C. Of certeyn concluſions prouvynge the yerthe muſt nedes be "rounde, and that yt is in circumference above xxi M. myle."—— "C. Of certeyne points of coſmographye—and of dyvers ſtraunge "regyons,—and of the new founde landys and the maner of the "people." This part is extremely curious, as it ſhews what notions were entertained of the new American diſcoveries by our own countrymen.

moral

moral interlude of **Lusty Juventus** *(b)*, written under Edward VI. the exits and entrances begin to be noted in the margin *(c)*: at length in Q. Elizabeth's reign Moralities appeared formally divided into acts and scenes, with a regular prologue, &c. One of these is reprinted by Dodsley.

Before we quit this subject of the very early printed plays, it may just be observed, that, although so few are now extant, it should seem many were printed before the reign of Q. Elizabeth, as, at the beginning of her reign, her INJUNCTIONS in 1559 are particularly directed to the suppressing of "many Pamphlets, PLAYES, "and Ballads; that no manner of person shall enter-"prize to print any such, &c." but under certain restrictions. Vid. Sect. 5.

In the time of Hen. VIII. one or two dramatic pieces had been published under the classical names of Comedy and Tragedy *(d)*, but they appear not to have been intended for popular use: it was not till the religious ferments had subsided that the public had leisure to attend to dramatic poetry. In the reign of Elizabeth Tragedies and Comedies began to appear in form, and, could the poets have persevered, the first models were good. **Gorboduc**, a regular tragedy, was acted in

(b) Described in vol. II. Preface to Book II. The Dramatis Personæ of this piece are, "C. Messenger, Lusty Juventus, Good Counsail, Knowledge, Sathan the devyll, Hypocrisie, Fellowship, Abominable-lyving [an Harlot], God's-merciful-promises."

(c) I have also discovered some few *Exeats* and *Intrats* in the very old Interlude of the **Four Elements**.

(d) Bp. Bale had applied the name of Tragedy to his Mystery of **Gods Promises**, in 1538. In 1540 John Palsgrave, B. D. had republished a Latin comedy, called **Acolastus**, with an English version. Holingshed tells us (vol. III. p. 850.), that so early as 1520, the king had "a good comedie of Plautus plaied" before him at Greenwich; but this was in Latin, as Mr. FARMER informs us in his curious "Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare," 8vo. p. 31.

1561;

1561 *(e)*; and Gaſcoigne, in 1566, exhibited **Jocaſta**, a tranſlation from Euripides, as alſo **The Supposes**, a regular comedy, from Arioſto: near thirty years before any of Shakeſpeare's were printed.

The people however ſtill retained a reliſh for their old Myſteries and Moralities *(f)*, and the popular dramatic poets ſeem to have made them their models. From the graver ſort of Moralities our modern TRAGEDY appears to have derived its origin; as our COMEDY evidently took its riſe from the lighter interludes of that kind. And as moſt of theſe pieces contain an abſurd mixture of religion and buffoonery, an eminent critic *(g)* has well deduced from thence the origin of our unnatural TRAGI-COMEDIES. Even after the people had been accuſtomed to Tragedies and Comedies, Moralities ſtill kept their ground: one of them intitled **The New Cuſtom** *(h)* was printed ſo late as 1573: at length they aſſumed the name of MASQUES *(i)*, and with ſome claſſical improvements, became in the two following reigns the favourite entertainmenis of the court.

IV. THE old Myſteries, which ceaſed to be acted after the Reformation, appear to have given birth to a THIRD SPECIES of ſtage exhibition, which, though now confounded with Tragedy and Comedy, were by our firſt dramatic writers conſidered as quite diſtinct

(e) See Ames, p. 316.——This play appears to have been firſt printed under the name of **Gorboduc**; then under that of **Ferrex and Porrex**, in 1569; and again, under **Gorboduc**, 1590.——Ames calls the firſt edition Quarto; Langbaine, Octavo; and Tanner, 12mo.

(f) The general reception the old Moralities had upon the ſtage, will account for the fondneſs of all our firſt poets for allegory. Subjects of this kind were familiar with every one.

(g) Bp. Warburt. Shakeſp. vol. V.

(h) Reprinted among Dodſley's Old Plays, vol. I.

(i) In ſome of theſe appeared characters full as extraordinary as in any of the old Moralities. In Ben Jonſon's Maſque of **Chriſtmas**, 1616, one of the perſonages is MINCED PYE.

from

from them both: these were Historical Plays, or Histories, a species of dramatic writing, which resembled the old Mysteries in representing a series of historical events simply in the order of time in which they happened, without any regard to the three great unities. These pieces seem to differ from Tragedies, just as much as Historical poems do from Epics; as the Pharsalia does from the Æneid.

What might contribute to make dramatic poetry take this form was, that soon after the Mysteries ceased to be exhibited, was published a large collection of poetical narratives, called The Mirrour for Magistrates (a), wherein a great number of the most eminent characters in English history are drawn relating their own misfortunes. This book was popular, and of a dramatic cast; and therefore, as an elegant writer (b) has well observed, might have its influence in producing Historical Plays. These narratives probably furnished the subjects, and the ancient Mysteries suggested the plan.

There appears indeed to have been one instance of an attempt at an HISTORICAL PLAY itself, which was perhaps as early as any Mystery on a religious subject; for such, I think, we may pronounce the representation of a memorable event in English History, that was EXPRESSED IN ACTIONS AND RHIMES. This was the old Coventry Play of HOCK-TUESDAY (c), founded on the story of the Massacre of the Danes, as it happened on St. Brice's night, November 13, 1002 (d). The play in question was performed by certain men of Coventry, among the other shews and entertainments at Kenelworth Castle, in July 1575, prepared for Queen

(a) The first part of which was printed in 1559.

(b) Catal. of Royal and Noble authors, vol. I. p. 166-7.

(c) This must not be confounded with the Mysteries acted on Corpus Christi day by the Franciscans at Coventry, which were also called COVENTRY PLAYS, and of which an account is given from T. Warton's Hist. of Eng. Poetry, &c. in Malone's Shakesp. vol. II. Part II. pag. 13, 14.

(d) Not 1012, as printed in Laneham's Letter, mentioned below:

Eliza-

Elizabeth, and this the rather "becauſe the matter "mentioneth how valiantly our Engliſh Women, for "the love of their country, behaved themſelves."

The writer, whoſe Words are here quoted *(e)*, hath given a ſhort deſcription of the performance; which ſeems on that occaſion to have been without Recitation or Rhimes, and reduced to meer Dumb-Show; conſiſting of violent ſkirmiſhes and encounters, firſt between Daniſh and Engliſh "lance-knights on horſe-"back," armed with ſpear and ſhield; and afterwards between "hoſts" of footmen: which at length ended in the Danes being "beaten down, overcome, and "many led captive by our Engliſh women." *(f)*

This play, it ſeems, which was wont to be exhibited in their city yearly, and which had been of great antiquity and long continuance there *(g)*, had of late been ſuppreſſed, at the inſtance of ſome well-meaning, but preciſe preachers, of whoſe "ſourneſs" herein the townſmen complain; urging that their play was "with-"out example of ill-manners, papiſtry, or any ſuper-"ſtition;" *(h)* which ſhews it to have been entirely diſtinct from a religious Myſtery. But having been diſcontinued, and, as appears from the narrative, taken up of a ſudden after the ſports were begun, the Players apparently had not been able to recover the old Rhimes, or to procure new ones, to accompany the action: which, if it originally repreſented "the outrage and importable inſolency of the Danes, the grievous complaint of Huna, king Ethelred's chieftain in wars (*);" his counſelling, and contriving the plot to diſpatch them; concluding with the conflicts above mentioned, and their final ſuppreſſion —— "expreſſed in Actions "and Rhimes after their manner *(i)*" one can hardly

(e) Ro. Laneham, whoſe LETTER, containing a full deſcription of the Shows, &c. is reprinted at large in Nichols's "Progreſſes of Q. Elizabeth," &c. vol. I. 4to. 1788.—That writer's orthography being peculiar and affected, is not here followed.

(f) Laneham, p. 37. *(g)* Ibid. p. 33.
(h) Ibid. (*) Ibid. p. 32. *(i)* Ibid. p. 33.

conceive a more regular model of a compleat drama; and, if taken up ſoon after the event, it muſt have been the earlieſt of the kind in Europe (†).

Whatever this old play, or "ſtorial ſhow *(k)*" was at the time it was exhibited to Q. Elizabeth, it had probably our young Shakeſpeare for a ſpectator, who was then in his twelfth year, and doubtleſs attended with all the inhabitants of the ſurrounding country at theſe "Princely pleaſures of Kenelworth *(l)*," whence Stratford is only a few miles diſtant. And as the Queen was much diverted with the Coventry Play, "whereat "her Majeſtie laught well," and rewarded the performers with 2 bucks, and 5 marks in money: who, "what "rejoicing upon their ample reward, and what tri-"umphing upon the good acceptance, vaunted their "Play was never ſo dignified, nor ever any Players "before ſo beatified:" but eſpecially if our young bard afterwards gained admittance into the caſtle to ſee a Play, which the ſame evening, after ſupper, was there "preſented of a very good theme, but ſo ſet-forth by "the actors' well-handling, that pleaſure and mirth "made it ſeem very ſhort, though it laſted two good "hours and more *(m)*," we may imagine what an impreſſion was made on his infant mind. Indeed the dramatic caſt of many parts of that ſuperb entertainment which continued nineteen days, and was the moſt ſplendid of the kind ever attempted in this kingdom; the Addreſſes to the Queen in the perſonated Characters of a Sybille, a Savage Man, and Sylvanus, as ſhe approached or departed from the caſtle; and, on the water, by Arion, a Triton, or, the Lady of the Lake, muſt have had a very great effect on a young imagination, whoſe dramatic powers were hereafter to aſtoniſh the world.

(†) Mr. THO. WARTON thinks the Myſteries compoſed before 1328 were in Latin. Malone's Shakeſp. Vol. II. Pt. II. p. 9.

(k) Laneham, p. 32. *(l)* See Nichols's Progreſſes, Vol I. p. 57.

(m) Laneham, p. 38, 39. This was on SUNDAY evening, July 9.

BUT

But that the Hiſtorical Play was conſidered by our old writers, and by SHAKESPEARE himſelf, as diſtinct from Tragedy and Comedy, will ſufficiently appear from various paſſages in their works. "Of late days," ſays Stow, "in place of thoſe ſtage-playes *(n)* hath been "uſed Comedies, Tragedies, Enterludes, and HISTO-"RIES both true and fayned *(o)*."—Beaumont and Fletcher, in the prologue to **The Captain**, ſay,

"This is nor Comedy, nor Tragedy,
"Nor HISTORY."——

Polonius in **Hamlet** commends the actors, as the beſt in the world, "either for Tragedie, Comedie, HIS-"TORIE, Paſtorall," &c. And Shakeſpeare's friends, Heminge and Condell, in the firſt folio edit. of his plays, in 1623 *(p)*, have not only intitled their book "Mr. William Shakeſpeare's Comedies, HISTORIES, "and Tragedies:" but in their Table of Contents have arranged them under thoſe three ſeveral heads; placing in the claſs of HISTORIES, "K. John, Richard II. Henry IV. 2 pts. Henry V. Henry VI. 3 pts. Rich. III. and Henry VIII." to which they might have added ſuch of his other plays as have their ſubjects taken from the old Chronicles, or Plutarch's Lives.

Although Shakeſpeare is found not to have been the firſt who invented this ſpecies of drama *(q)*, yet he cultivated it with ſuch ſuperior ſucceſs, and threw upon this ſimple inartificial tiſſue of ſcenes ſuch a blaze of Genius, that his HISTORIES maintain their ground in defiance of Ariſtotle and all the critics of the Claſſic School, and will ever continue to intereſt and inſtruct an Engliſh audience.

(n) The Creation of the World, acted at Skinners-well in 1409:

(o) See Stow's Survey of London, 1603, 4to. p. 94, (ſaid in the title-page to be "written in the year 1598.") See alſo Warton's Obſervations on Spenſer, vol. II. p. 109.

(p) The ſame diſtinction is continued in the 2d and 3d folios, &c.

(q) See Malone's Shakeſp. vol. I. part II. p. 31.

Before Shakeſpeare wrote, Hiſtorical Plays do not appear to have attained this diſtinction, being not mentioned in Q. Elizabeth's Licence in 1574 *(r)* to James Burbage and others, who are only impowered "to uſe, exercyſe, and occupie the arte and faculty "of playenge Commedies, Tragedies, Enterludes, Stage-"Playes, and ſuch other like."—But when Shakeſpeare's HISTORIES had become the ornaments of the ſtage, they were conſidered by the publick, and by himſelf, as a formal and neceſſary ſpecies, and are thenceforth ſo diſtinguiſhed in public inſtruments. They are particularly inſerted in the Licence granted by K. James I. in 1603 *(ſſ)*, to W. Shakeſpeare himſelf, and the Players his fellows; who are authorized "to uſe and exerciſe the arte "and faculty of playing Comedies, Tragedies, HISTO-"RIES, Interludes, Morals, Paſtorals, Stage-plaies, "and ſuch like."

The ſame merited diſtinction they continued to maintain after his death, till the Theatre itſelf was extinguiſhed: for they are expreſſly mentioned in a warrant in 1622, for licenſing certain "late Comedians of Q. "Anne deceaſed, to bring up children in the qualitie "and exereiſe of playing Comedies, HISTORIES, In-"terludes, Morals, Paſtorals, Stage-Plaies, and ſuch "like (*)." The ſame appears in an Admonition iſſued in 1637 *(t)* by Philip Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, then Lord Chamberlain, to the maſter and wardens of the company of Printers and Stationers; wherein is ſet forth the complaint of his Majeſty's ſervants the Players, that "diverſe of their books of Comedyes and "Tragedyes, CHRONICLE-HISTORYES, and the like," had been printed and publiſhed to their prejudice, &c.

(r) See Malone's Shakeſp. vol. I. P. II. p. 37. *(ſſ)* Ibid. p. 40.

(*) Ibid. p. 49. Here HISTORIES, or Hiſtorical Plays are found totally to have excluded the mention of Tragedies; a proof of their ſuperior popularity.—In an Order for the King's Comedians to attend K. Charles I. in his ſummer's progreſs, 1636, (Ibid. p. 144.) HISTORIES are not particularly mentioned; but ſo neither are Tragedies: They being briefly directed to "act Playes, Comedyes, "and Interludes, without any lett," &c. *(t)* Ibid. p. 139.

This

This diſtinction, we ſee, prevailed for near half a century; but after the Reſtoration, when the ſtage revived for the entertainment of a new race of auditors, many of whom had been exiled in France, and formed their taſte from the French theatre, Shakeſpeare's HISTORIES appear to have been no longer reliſhed; at leaſt the diſtinction reſpecting them is dropt in the patents that were immediately granted after the king's return.

This appears not only from the allowance to Mr. William Beeſton in June 1660 *(u)*, to uſe the houſe in Saliſbury-court "for a Play-houſe, wherein Comedies, "Tragedies, Tragi-comedies, Paſtoralls, and Interludes, "may be acted," but alſo from the fuller Grant (dated Auguſt 21, 1760) *(v)* to Thomas Killigrew, eſq. and Sir William Davenant, knt. by which they have authority to erect two companies of players, and to fit up two theatres "for the repreſentation of Tragydies, "Comedyes, Playes, Operas, and all other entertain-"ments of that nature."

But while Shakeſpeare was the favourite dramatic poet, his HISTORIES had ſuch ſuperior merit, that he might well claim to be the chief, if not the only hiſtoric dramatiſt that kept poſſeſſion of the Engliſh ſtage; which gives a ſtrong ſupport to the tradition mentioned by Gildon *(w)*, that, in a converſation with BEN JONSON, our Bard vindicated his Hiſtorical Plays, by urging, that, as he had found "the nation in general very "ignorant of hiſtory, he wrote them in order to inſtruct "the people in this particular." This is aſſigning not only a good motive, but a very probable reaſon for his preference of this ſpecies of compoſition; ſince we cannot doubt but his illiterate countrymen would not only want ſuch inſtruction when he firſt began to write, notwithſtanding the obſcure dramatic chroniclers who

(u) This is believed to be the date by Mr. Malone. Vol. II. P. II. p. 239. *(v)* Ibid. p. 244.

(w) See Malone's Shakeſp. vol. VI. p. 427. This ingenious writer will, with his known liberality, excuſe the difference of opinion here entertained concerning the above tradition.

pre-

preceded him; but alſo that they would highly profit by his admirable Lectures on Engliſh Hiſtory ſo long as he continued to deliver them to his audience. And, as it implies no claim to his being the *firſt* who introduced our chronicles on the ſtage, I ſee not why the tradition ſhould be rejected.

Upon the whole we have had abundant proof, that both Shakeſpeare and his contemporaries conſidered his HISTORIES, or Hiſtorical Plays, as of a legitimate diſtinct ſpecies, ſufficiently ſeparate from Tragedy and Comedy; a diſtinction which deſerves the particular attention of his critics and commentators; who, by not adverting to it, deprive him of his proper defence and beſt vindication for his neglect of the Unities, and departure from the claſſical Dramatic Forms. For, if it be the firſt Canon of ſound criticiſm to examine any work by whatever Rule the author preſcribed for his own obſervance, then we ought not to try Shakeſpeare's HISTORIES by the general laws of Tragedy or Comedy. Whether the Rule itſelf be vicious or not, is another inquiry: but certainly we ought to examine a work only by thoſe principles according to which it was compoſed. This would ſave a deal of impertinent criticiſm.

V. WE have now brought the inquiry as low as was intended, but cannot quit it, without entering into a ſhort deſcription of what may be called the Œconomy of the ancient Engliſh ſtage.

Such was the fondneſs of our forefathers for dramatic entertainments, that not fewer than NINETEEN Playhouſes had been opened before the year 1633, when Prynne publiſhed his Hiſtriomaſtix *(a)*. From

(a) He ſpeaks in p. 492, of the Playhouſes in Biſhopſgate-ſtreet, and on Ludgate-hill, which are not among the SEVENTEEN enumerated in the Preface to Dodſley's Old Plays. Nay, it appears from Rymer's MSS. that TWENTY-THREE Playhouſes had been at different periods open in London; and even SIX of them at one time. See Malone's Shakeſp. Vol. I. Pt. II. p. 48.

this

this writer it ſhould ſeem that "tobacco, wine, and "beer *(b)*," were in thoſe days the uſual accommodations in the theatre, as within our memory at Sadler's Wells.

With regard to the Players themſelves, the ſeveral companies were (as hath been already ſhewn) *(c)* retainers, or menial ſervants to particular noblemen *(d)*, who protected them in the exerciſe of their profeſſion:

(b) So, I think, we may infer from the following paſſage, viz. "How many are there, who, according to their ſeveral qualities, "ſpend 2d. 3d. 4d. 6d. 12d. 18d. 2s. and ſometimes 4s. or 5s. at a "play-houſe, day by day, if coach-hire, boat-hire, tobacco, wine, "beere, and ſuch like vaine expences, which playes doe uſually "occaſion, be caſt into the reckoning?" Prynne's Hiſtriom. p. 322.

But that Tobacco was ſmoaked in the playhouſes, appears from Taylor the Water-poet, in his Proclamation for Tobacco's Propagation. "Let PLAY-HOUSES, drinking-ſchools, taverns, &c. be con- "tinually haunted with the contaminous vapours of it; nay (if it "be poſſible) bring it into the CHURCHES, and there choak up "their preachers." (Works, p. 253.) And this was really the caſe at Cambridge: James I. ſent a letter in 1607, againſt "taking To- "bacco" in St. Mary's. So I learn from my friend Dr. FARMER.

A gentleman has informed me, that once going into a church in Holland, he ſaw the male part of the audience ſitting with their hats on, ſmoking tobacco, while the preacher was holding forth in his morning-gown.

(c) See the extracts above, in p. 136, from the E. of Northumb. Houſhold Book.

(d) See the Pref. to Dodſley's Old Plays.——The author of an old Invective againſt the Stage, called, A third Blaſt of Retrait from Plaies, &c. 1580, 12mo. ſays, "Alas! that private affection ſhould "ſo raigne in the nobilitie, that to pleaſure their ſervants, and to "upholde them in their vanitye, they ſhould reſtraine the magiſtrates "from executing their office!... They [the nobility] are thought to "be covetous by permitting their ſervants... to live at the devotion "or almes of other men, paſſing from countrie to countrie, from one "gentleman's houſe to another, offering their ſervice, which is a "kind of beggerie. Who indeede, to ſpeake more trulie, are be- "come beggers for their ſervants. For comonlie the good-wil, men "beare to their Lordes, makes them draw the ſtringes of their purſes "to extend their liberalitie." Vid. pag. 75, 76, &c.

and

and many of them were occaſionally Strollers, that travelled from one gentleman's houſe to another. Yet ſo much were they encouraged, that, notwithſtanding their multitude, ſome of them acquired large fortunes. Edward Allen, maſter of the playhouſe called the Globe, who founded Dulwich college, is a known inſtance. And an old writer ſpeaks of the very inferior actors, whom he calls the Hirelings, as living in a degree of ſplendor, which was thought enormous in that frugal age *(e)*.

(e) Stephen Goſſon, in his Schoole of Abuſe, 1579, 12mo. fo. 23, ſays thus of what he terms in his margin PLAYERS-MEN: "Over "laſhing in apparel is ſo common a fault, that the very hyerlings "of ſome of our Players, which ſtand at revirſion of vi s. by the "week, jet under gentlemens no es in ſutis of ſilke, exerciſing themſelves to prating on the ſtage, and common ſcoffing when they "come abrode, where they look aſkance over the ſhoulder at every "man, of whom the SUNDAY before they begged an almes. I ſpeake "not this, as th ugh everye one that profeſſeth the qualitie ſo abuſed "himſelfe, for it is well knowen, that ſome of them are ſober, "diſcreete, properly learned, honeſt houſholders and citizens, well-"thought on among their neighbours at home." [he ſeems to mean EDW. ALLEN above-mentioned] "though the pryde of their ſhadowes (I meane thoſe hanghyes, whom they ſuccour with ſtipend) "cauſe them to be ſomewhat il-talked of abroad."

In a ſubſequent period we have the following ſatirical fling at the ſhewy exterior, and ſuppoſed profits of the actors of that time.—Vid. GREENE's Groatſworth of Wit, 1625, 4to. "WHAT is your "profeſſion?"—"Truly, Sir, ... I am a PLAYER." "A Player? "... I took you rather for a Gentleman of great living; for, if "by outward Habit men ſhould be cenſured, I tell you, you would "be taken for a ſubſtantial man." "So I am where I dwell .... "What, though the world once went hard with me, when I was "fayne to carry my playing-fardle a foot-backe: *Tempora mutantur* "... for my very ſhare in playing apparrell will not be ſold for "TWO HUNDRED pounds .... Nay more, I can ſerve to make a "pretty ſpeech, for I was a country Author, paſſing at a MORAL, "&c." See Roberto's Tale, ſign. D. 3. b.

AT

At the ſame time the ancient Prices of admiſſion were often very low. Some houſes had penny-benches *(f)*. The "two-penny gallery" is mentioned in the prologue to Beaumont and Fletcher's Woman-Hater *(g)*. And ſeats of three-pence and a groat ſeem to be intended in the paſſage of Prynne above referred to. Yet different houſes varied in their prices: That playhouſe called the Hope had ſeats of five ſeveral rates from ſix-pence to half-a-crown *(h)*. But a ſhilling ſeems to have been the uſual price *(i)* of what is now called the Pit, which probably had its name from one of the playhouſes having been a Cock-pit *(k)*.

(f) So a MS. of Oldys, from Tom Naſh, an old pamphlet-writer. And this is confirmed by Taylor the Water-poet, in his Praiſe of Beggerie, p. 99.

"Yet have I ſeen a begger with his many, [ſc. vermin]
"Come at a Play-houſe, all in for one penny."

(g) So in the Belman's Night-Walks by Decker, 1616, 4to. "Pay thy TWO-PENCE to a Player, in this gallery thou mayeſt ſit "by a harlot."

(h) Induct. to Ben. Jonſon's Bartholomew-fair. An ancient ſatirical piece, called, "The Blacke Book, Lond. 1604, 4to." talks of "The SIX-PENNY Roomes in Playhouſes;" and leaves a legacy to one whom he calls "Arch-tobacco-taker of England, in ordina-"ries, upon STAGES both common and private."

(i) Shakeſp. Prol. to Hen. viij.—Beaum. and Fletch. Prol. to the Captain, and to the Mad-lover.

(k) This etymology hath been objected to by a very ingenious writer (ſee Malone's Shakeſp. Vol. I. P. II. p. 59.), who thinks it queſtionable, becauſe, in St. Mary's church at Cambridge, the area that is under the pulpit, and ſurrounded by the galleries, is *(now)* called the Pit; which, he ſays, no one can ſuſpect to have been a *Cock-pit*, or that a playhouſe phraſe could be applied to a church.—But whoever is acquainted with the licentiouſneſs of boys, will not think it impoſſible that they ſhould thus apply a name ſo peculiarly expreſſive of its ſituation: which from frequent uſe might at length prevail among the ſenior members of the Univerſity; eſpecially when thoſe young men became ſeniors themſelves. The name of Pit, ſo applied at Cambridge, muſt be deemed to have been a cant phraſe, until it can be ſhewn that the area in other churches was uſually ſo called.

The day originally ſet apart for theatrical exhibition appears to have been Sunday; probably becauſe the firſt dramatic pieces were of a religious caſt. During a great part of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the playhouſes were only licenſed to be opened on that day *(l)*: But before the end of her reign, or ſoon after, this abuſe was probably removed.

The uſual time of acting was early in the afternoon *(m)*, plays being generally performed by day-light *(n)*. All female parts were performed by men, no Engliſh

(l) So Ste. Goſſon in his Schoole of Abuſe, 1579, 12mo. ſpeaking of the Players, ſays, "Theſe, becauſe they are allowed to play "every Sunday, make iiii. or v. Sundayes at leaſt every week," fol. 24.——So the author of A Second and Third Blaſt of Retrait from Plaies, 1580, 12mo. "Let the magiſtrate but repel them from "the libertie of plaeing on the Sabboth-daie. . . . . To plaie on "the Sabboth is but a priviledge of ſufferance, and might with eaſe "be repelled, were it thoroughly followed." pag. 61. 62. So again, "Is not the Sabboth of al other daies the moſt abuſed? . . . Where-"fore abuſe not ſo the Sabboth-daie, my brethren; leave not the "temple of the Lord." . . . . "Thoſe unſaverie morſels of un-"ſeemelie ſentences paſſing out of the mouth of a ruffenlie plaier, "doth more content the hungrie humors of the rude multitude, and "carrieth better reliſh in their mouthes, than the bread of the "worde, &c." Vid pag. 63, 65, 69, &c. I do not recollect that exclamations of this kind occur in Prynne, whence I conclude that this enormity no longer ſubſiſted in this time.

It ſhould alſo ſeem, from the author of the Third Blaſt above-quoted, that the Churches ſtill continued to be uſed occaſionally for theatres. Thus, in p. 77, he ſays, that the Players, (who, as hath been obſerved, were ſervants of the nobility) "under the title of "their maſters, or as reteiners, are priviledged to roave abroad, "and permitted to publiſh their mamentree in everie temple of God, "and that throughout England, unto the horrible contempt of "praier."

(m) "He entertaines us (ſays Overbury in his character of an Actor) "in the beſt leaſure of our life, that is, betweene meales; the "moſt unfit time either for ſtudy, or bodily exerciſe."—Even ſo late as in the reign of Chas. II. Plays generally began at 3 in the afternoon.

(n) See Biogr. Brit. I. 117, n. D.

actreſs

actreſs being ever ſeen on the public ſtage (o) before the civil wars.

Laſtly, with regard to the playhouſe Furniture and Ornaments, a writer of King Charles IId's time (p), who well remembered the preceding age, aſſures us, that in general "they had no other ſcenes nor decora-"tions of the ſtage, but only old tapeſtry, and the ſtage "ſtrewed with ruſhes, with habits accordingly (q)."

Yet Coryate thought our theatrical exhibitions, &c. ſplendid, when compared with what he ſaw abroad: Speaking of the Theatre for Comedies at Venice, he ſays, "The houſe is very beggarly and baſe in compa-"riſon of our ſtately Playhouſes in England: neyther "can their actors compare with ours for Apparrell, "Shewes, and Muſicke. Here I obſerved certaine things

(o) I ſay "no ENGLISH Actreſs—on the PUBLIC Stage," becauſe Prynne ſpeaks of it as an unuſual enormity, that "they had "French-women actors in a play not long ſince perſonated in Black-"friars Playhouſe." This was in 1629, vid. p. 215. And tho' female parts were performed by men or boys on the public ſtage, yet in Maſques at Court, the Queen and her ladies made no ſcruple to perform the principal parts, eſpecially in the reigns of James I. and Charles I.

Sir William Davenant, after the reſtoration, introduced Women, Scenery, and higher Prices. See Cibber's Apology for his own Life.

(p) See a ſhort Diſcourſe on the Engliſh Stage, ſubjoined to Flecknor's "Love's Kingdom," 1674, 12mo.

(q) It appears from an Epigram of Taylor the Water-poet, that one of the principal Theatres in his time, viz. The Globe on the Bankſide, Southwark, (which Ben Jonſon calls the Glory of the Bank, and Fort of the whole pariſh,) had been covered with Thatch till it was burnt down in 1613.—(See Taylor's Scullar, Epig. 22, p. 31. Jonſon's Execration on Vulcan.)

Puttenham tells us they uſed Vizards in his time, "partly to "ſupply the want of players, when there were more parts than there "were perſons, or that it was not thought meet to trouble . . . . "princes chambers with too many folkes." [Art of Eng. Poeſ. 1589, p. 26.] From the laſt clauſe, it ſhould ſeem that they were chiefly uſed in the MASQUES at Court.

"that

"that I never ſaw before: For, I ſaw WOMEN ACT, a "thing that I never ſaw before, though I have heard "that it hath been ſometimes uſed in London: and "they performed it with as good a grace, action, "geſture, and whatſoever convenient for a Player, as "ever I ſaw any maſculine Actor *(r)*."

It ought however to be obſerved, that, amid ſuch a multitude of Playhouſes as ſubſiſted in the Metropolis before the Civil Wars, there muſt have been a great difference between their ſeveral accommodations, ornaments, and prices; and that ſome would be much more ſhewy than others, though probably all were much inferior in ſplendor to the two great Theatres after the Reſtoration.

(r) Coryate's Crudities, 4to. 1611, p. 247.

☞ *Since the preceding* ESSAY *was firſt publiſhed, the Hiſtory of the Engliſh Stage hath been copiouſly handled by Mr.* THO. WARTON *in his "Hiſtory of Engliſh Poetry, "1775, &c." 3 vols. 4to. (wherein is inſerted whatever in theſe Pages fell in with his ſubject); and by* EDMOND MALONE, *Eſq. who, in his "Hiſtorical Account of the "Engliſh Stage," (Shakeſp. Vol. I. Part II. 1790.) hath added greatly to our knowledge of the Oeconomy and Uſages of our ancient Theatres.*

THE END OF THE ESSAY.